

# Doctors Warned On Cancer Views

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A veteran cancer researcher today warned Hoosier family doctors to be as skeptical of theories regarding the cause of cancer as they have learned to become toward the many unfounded theories of its cure.

Clarence Cook Little, Sc.D., for 16 years manager director of the organization which later became the American Cancer Society, said an understanding of cancer awaits much further research.

Addressing the final session of the scientific assembly of the Indiana Academy of General Practice in the Scottish Rite Cathedral, Dr. Little said investigations of cancer must still be pursued in many directions.

"Certain broad categories of factors seem to have earned the right to our continued attention and investigation if we are to hope for the new knowledge necessary to understand and control the many forms of the disease which we call cancer," he said.

## Internal 'Unbalance' Blamed

The research scientist, who has held the presidencies of both the University of Michigan and the University of Maine during his distinguished career, said cancer seems to occur under various "conditions of internal unbalance."

There are many causes of "unbalance," and not enough is known about any of these, he opined.

Dr. Little listed several factors, each having indicated it plays some role in cancer's cause and development.

He named heredity, infection, nutrition, hormones, nervous strain and environment as examples.

A complete understanding of the many different kinds of cancer is dependent on further research in these fields, the speaker said. In this connection, he pointed out the tobacco industry is making funds available for this type of investigative work — involving heart and circulatory ills as well as cancer — by creation of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee.

"The committee's research program is unique in that responsibility for research policy and development is entirely in the hands of a Scientific Advisory Board con-

sisting of 10 doctors and scientists. This board, which came into being six years ago, makes grants to independent scientists on the basis of the merit of their research proposals," he said.

Dr. Little serves as scientific director to the committee. He cautioned against accepting any one explanation of the cancer problem, whether it be smoking, air pollution, the stress of modern life or heredity.

"In the long run, such an attitude will boomerang and will end in disillusionment and disappointment to its proponent, the practitioner and the patient," he declared.

Those doing cancer research have a difficult job, the scientist pointed out.

"They are not encouraged by criticism and misinterpretation," he concluded.

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## Evidence Is Still Lacking

The debate over the relation of cigarette smoking and lung cancer continues in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It will be remembered that Dr. Leroy E. Burney, surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service, published an article in the *Journal* last November in which he claimed a close and direct relation between smoking and lung cancer.

The following week, the *Journal* editorially questioned Dr. Burney's conclusions, taking the position that they were based on "insufficient evidence." Subsequently a letter to the *Journal* from Dr. David D. Rutstein of the Harvard Medical School expressed "shock" at the editorial.

Now Dr. Joseph Berkson of the Mayo Clinic replies to Dr. Rutstein and Dr. Burney in what is perhaps the strongest statement from the medical profession yet published questioning the claim that smoking is conducive to lung cancer.

Dr. Berkson charges that Dr. Burney's article "is characterized by an imprecision of language and thought that renders inaccurate almost every point it deals with. In particular, it contains some frank errors of omission and commission which are misleading with regard to the basic questions at issue."

Dr. Berkson challenges Dr. Burney's statement that "nonsmoking women have about the same lung cancer death rate as nonsmoking men." Instead, the Mayo Clinic physician asserts that "the death rate for men is greater than that for women, not only for cancer of the lung but for cancer of almost every organ that is comparable in the two sexes and for virtually every non-cancerous disease also."

The reliability of the Burney article is further questioned in the criticism that its author did not use of the findings of the Public Health Service pathologist, Dr. H. L. Stewart, (that cigarette smoke failed to produce lung cancer in mice) or of the statistician of the National Institutes of Health, Harold F. Dorn, in the preparation of the article.

Also quite damaging to Dr. Burney's position is that charge that at the National Cancer Institute nothing has been done, although \$85,000,000 was appropriated to the Institute, to carry out "the first steps to be taken to realize the discovery of an important cause of lung cancer."

In other words, the true relationship of smoking and lung cancer, if any, has not yet been determined, much less made public.

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